

# CRITICAL DIGEST

August 31, 1953 Vol V No 51 505-5th Av, NYC T 11 Kraus \$10 year LY 9-2826, MU 2-0326

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the New York Theatre Scene

## New York Theatre Diary

Oklahoma-City Center 8/31/53. 5 week limited run of Rodgers & Hammerstein 1st winner, prior to resumption of national tour. Florence Henderson, Ridge Bond and Mary Marlow, staged by Jerome Whyte...Hazel Flagg-Hellinger 9/1/53. Jule Styne production re-opens after 8 week vacation. Helen Gallagher, Thomas Mitchell, Jack Whiting, and Tony Bavaar.

## Strawhat Tryouts

On Cobweb Time, 3 poetic sketches by Anna Marie Barlow produced at Sea Cliff, NY, Theatre, was credited by trade paper reporters with showing that the new playwright has potential, but needs to learn more about the drama. McDonald, Billboard, okayed a fine cast headed by Jeffrey Lynn and Mildred Natwick, though he feared they were incomplete from a drama standpoint. While Man's Variety, noted that the drama is static where it should be dynamic...To Hell With Orpheus. St. John Terrell's production of the Offenbach tale with book by Ring Lardner, Sr. and Edward Eager produced at his Lambertville, NJ, Music Circus, can rate its summer critical score at 3 to 1. Last week Kerr, Herald Tribune and Dash, Woman's Wear, filed con notices, this week Ward, Variety, okays it, while Watts, Post, joined the majority. The Variety mugg admitted script needed more continuity, but the overall effect was good. But Post man panned the book for its lack of wit, comic imagination or authentic satirical view. He found instead the unfortunate effect of seeming like something a high school dramatic society had thought up in a larkish mood.

The Man Who Had All The Luck, Arthur Miller's 1st produced play, received a good production at Westhampton, NY, Playhouse, rates Lewis, Cue. The play itself is filled with sharp Miller insights into man's conditions, shot through with homely wisdom. It also contains quite a bit of pretentious and self conscious dialogue...Days of Grabe, Alexander Fedoroff's play about the life in a cloister which debuted at Westport, Conn., Country Playhouse, is a searching drama, commends Doué, Variety. MacDonald Carey, John Alexander and Katherine Squire head a fine cast...By Hex, a new musical based on the Penn. Dutch Amish people by John Rengier and Howard Blankman and produced at the Green Room, Lancaster, Pa., was rated a colorful, exhilarating musical by Clark, Variety. See "Pros & Cons" Page 3.

## Hits Revisited

Guys and Dolls continues to be one of the most delightful and satisfying musical plays in the eventful history of the popular American theatre, raves Watts, Post. Though current cast doesn't seem as close to perfection as the opening night group in November 1950, they are, on the whole, reasonably satisfactory substitutes. Having recently seen the London production, the critic reports that the English audience seems more appreciative of the nuances of the Runyon dialogue and the turns of the Runyon characters.

## NY Travel Recipe

Unusual viewing advice for prospective NY visitors issued by Pearson, NBC Critic At Large, who urges a visit to the UN to hear a Vishinsky monologue in the afternoon, followed by an evening visit to Rosalind Russell in Wonderful Town. Both steal the show with their fast pace, broadcaster compares.

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: Village Theatre :  
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The Glass Menagerie will be revived for a 2 week run at the Provincetown on Sept 1, directed by Burns Bachrach... Thunder Rock will be presented at the Amato Opera Theatre Sept 3-5...Trio Productions will re-open at the Cherry Lane Sept 23 with The Plough and the Stars. Group has spent summer at the East Chop Playhouse on Martha's Vineyard. Paul Vincent Carroll The Wise Have Not Spoken, which they staged this summer will be presented in NY later this fall.

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: Off Broadway :  
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Actors Mobile Theatre will present its 1st program of capsule classics Nov 2 at 430 6th Ave, which it will operate jointly with Club Cinema, The group's acting studio opens Sept 28...The World of Sholom Aleichem re-opens at the Barbizon Plaza Sept 11 for a 7 week run...The Comic Opera Guild will present Patience at McBurney Theatre, 215 W 23, Sept 27

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: Vaudeville :  
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New Palace show features Wally Brown, Joan Brandon, Wong Sisters, Jose Duval, Mo-Farland and Brown, Billy & Ann, Lee Wallace and Ross & La Pierré.

Radio City Music Hall new revue is "Confetti" features Clifford Guest, Tony Starman, Paula Lloyd, Jack Beeber, Patricia Rayney and George Sawtelle!

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: Outdoor Pageants :  
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The 17th Star, opens a 12 night run Aug 27 at Columbus, Ohio in honor of the state's Sesquicentennial celebration. Written by Paul Green the cast will number 500 and will feature Gene Lockhart.

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: Theatre Book Comments :  
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"The Nonesuch Shakespeare" edition (Random House #35) 4 volume set is highly recommended by Atkinson, Times and Chapman, News. Designed by Sir Francis Leynell, they are printed on an India paper that is crisp and opaque. When originally published 20 years ago they cost \$200 per set.

As examples of bookmaking, Atkinson comments, the 4 volumes are a pleasure to have, to hold and to read. They are notable because they are based on the First Folio, with the original spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Critic feels this version keeps the theatre fan constantly aware of the fact that Shakespeare had all his freshness in a particular period of English culture before scholars translated him into modern usage.

Complete works of Shakespeare can be had for \$1.98, plus 50¢ for a magnifying glass to read the volume's tiny print, points out Chapman. But for those who want something better he recommends the "Nonesuch" edition. The cost is worth it to anybody who appreciates the great art of bookmaking. Chapman suggests that the S US, British and Canadian producers who are planning to build replicas of the Globe Theatre in their respective countries should put a set of the edition in their theatre's cornerstone.

"Steel at Drury Lane" by John Loftis (University of California Press #4) and "Box Pit and Gallery by James J. Lynch (U of C #5) were recommended as 2 scholarly books of considerable value to theatrical libraries by Down Variety. The first studies Richard Steele as a playwright, essayist and theatre governor, while the second considers London society and the stage in Sam Johnson's.

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: Gift Coupon :  
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! Green Room Department !  
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R & H WEEK PRO...NY Times and NY Herald Tribune editorials cheered NYC's proclamation of Aug 31-Sept 6 as Rodgers & Hammerstein week. Former comments that the authors have earned their prosperity without sacrificing a single principle, while at the same time they have created a sort of enduring folklore. Herald Tribune notes that the musical comedy writing team have added a whole new dimension of feeling and delight to the medium. Phillips, World Telegram & Sun, suggests a line of march for a R & H parade. First would come the oldest survivors of Oklahoma's 1st night, followed by Americans who succeeded in getting good seats to South Pacific, and in 15th place authors who didn't keep it clean, but scored a couple of big hits, still insisting it's the breaks.

CON R & H WEEK...Mayor Impellitteri could have done Rodgers & Hammerstein and the rest of the city a favor, pans Kempton, Post, by proclaiming the week as a period of mourning for NY's otherwise total dehydration into a Sahara for the serious arts. NY, a cultural Peoria with delusions of being an Athens, has got itself into the sad situation of one writing team turning out 25% of the available 14 Broadway shows.

ADD CRITICS DEFINED...A drama critic is a man who was stage-struck as a youth, then dreamed of being a playwright and ends up as a self appointed judge of acting, production and direction, comments Baxter, London Evening Standard.

VARIETY'S MAIL BAG...3 letters from actors and a paid full page ad from a producer were filed in Variety this week. Lionel Stander denies he was fired from the Pal Joey company in Chicago, Sam Levene reports he is on a happy honeymoon during the London run of Guys & Dolls and is certainly not homesick, while the secretary of British Actors Equity explains that Garry Davis brought his English troubles on himself. Variety was charged with inaccurate reporting by Arthur Schwartz, president of the League of NY Theatres, in a paid ad in the trade journal. Producer feels that the paper's "Revolt of the Broadway Angels" article was a most sweeping, inaccurate and damaging indictment of the producing fraternity. Most of the points mentioned, Schwartz, adds are either impossible or illegal.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Drama critics who comment unfavourably on either Myron Fagan or his new play Red Rainbow will be smeared by a staff of West Coast press agents as "pro-communist" warns Gray, Post...Wandering reviewers who find themselves at the Great Neck Playhouse are invited to the Town House, Great Neck, LI, for dinner, advises Paddleford, Herald Tribune.

COLUMN TIPS...5 summer theatre actors worthy of Broadway were named by Hawkins, WT&S, and include Frank Rogier, Tom Coley, Paula Lawrence, Jackson Young, and Linda Berlin...Arms And The Man starring Marlon Brando was dropped from the summer circuit simply because the star's friends had no talent, hears Mortimer, Mirror...Future plans for Rodgers & Hammerstein call for Tara Hall, a musical version of "Gone With the Wind", and a stage version of "Sunset Boulevard", reports Walker, News.

INTERVIEW HI-LITE...Free matinees once a month for teen-agers will be started by Jule Styne with Hazel Flagg soon, the producer told Morehouse, WT&S. He hopes others will follow this practice of encouraging theatre in teenagers.

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! Pros & Cons by TMK !  
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The tired summer theatre cliche "needs work" fits By Hex, produced by the Summer Stock Players, Lancaster, Pa. The original, fresh book based on Penn Dutch customs,

hexes and accents, written by John Rengier, deserves fresher and more original music. Howard Blankman's score sounds like warmed over Rodgers & Hammerstein.

NYC Theatre News Round Up

If you want to see Kind Sir the new Norman Krasna comedy starring Charles Boyer and Mary Martin and produced and directed by Josh Logan, you had better start now getting friendly with Richard Towers, a stage manager at A Night in Venice and Cathryn Damon, a dancer at the Metropolitan Opera and at A Night in Venice. This lucky pair have received a wedding gift from Richard's father, the manager of the Supreme Theatre Ticket Agency, NY, that could make them popular and/or rich in a hurry. As the entire run of the new comedy which opens at the Alvin Nov 4 for a limited 7 month run will certainly be sold out by opening night, their wedding gift of 6 house seats nightly for the run will be the most sought after ducats in town.

\$400,000 in advance sales were sold by the production before a house was booked in NY, and the story is the same on the show's out of town tour. Most of these tickets were sold to a special mailing list Leland Hayward and Josh Logan have been developing for years. Thus no matter what the verdict of the NY critics, the production has paid off and the show's backers-Logan, Krasna, Martin and Boyer, have already received a profit on their "investment." And the theatre fan, unless he mailed his check in early or unless he wants to pay scalper prices, has slight chances of seeing the play.

#### Plays

2 legitimates theatres that have been used recently as TV studios were definitely booked by shows this week. Longacre will return to the fold Oct 21 with Walter Fried's The Ladies in the Corridor, a comedy by Dorothy Parker and Arnaud d'Usseau. While the Belesco plays host to The Solid Gold Cadillac, Max Gordon's production of the new George S Kaufman and Howard Teichmann comedy... Jose Ferrer has dropped plans to bring Olivia de Havilland to Broadway in The Dazzling Hour... Add late starter to a hectic fall season: The Paradise Question, a comedy about the UN by Walter Hart and Richard Mailbaum, opening Oct 8 at the Henry Miller... South Pacific switches to Sunday night performances, dropping Monday shows... 5th Season has dropped Sept 18 evening performance and Sept 19 matinee to allow Menasha Skulinik to observe the Jewish Day of Atonement. Performances will be played instead on Monday, Sept 14, and Wed. matinee Sept 16. All clear?

#### People

There is a wide difference of opinion as to why Barbara Bel Geddes will not appear in Sabrina Fair. Playwrights Company says she didn't live up to her contract to appear regardless of her approval of the final script, while actress said that her acceptance depended on her okay of Samuel Taylor's rewrite... Diana Herbert enters the cast of Wonderful Town, replacing Michele Burke who joins the Kate Smith TV show... 2 new songs have been added for Tony Bavaar in Hazel Flagg... Stu Erwin will direct Packaged in Paris, a musical comedy by George Marion, Jr and Harry Revel.

#### Theatre Film Notes

Background shots for the film "Oklahoma" are now being shot in South West US... MGM "Kiss Me Kate" will be shown in both 3 D and regular color.

#### Theatre TV & Radio Notes

NBC Radio will broadcast 2 special productions of Shakespeare by the Old Vic, and then will sell albums of the broadcast plays... Laurence Olivier's new production at his London St. James Theatre, Maurette's Anestasia was bought after his wife, Vivien Leigh viewed a BBC TV production of same. This is the 2nd script to jump from BBC TV to the stage. The first is Dial M For Murder.

